



## NEWS RELEASE

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# **New ‘Limited Access’ Striping Ordered for I-680 To Prepare for Bay Area’s First Express Lane**

PLEASANTON, CA (September 2, 2010) – With Northern California’s first Express Lane set to open September 20, contractors putting the final touches on the lane will change carpool lane striping to “limited access” on 14 miles of Interstate 680 southbound from Pleasanton to Milpitas, starting the week of September 7. Two lanes will be closed each night along a portion of the project to facilitate the striping work.

The I-680 Express Lane will launch a new era in Bay Area transportation and congestion management: for the first time, solo drivers can choose to use the carpool lane by paying a toll electronically via a FasTrak<sup>®</sup> toll tag. Carpools, transit vehicles, and motorcycles, as well as hybrid vehicles with a valid sticker, will continue to use the lane for free.

To make it happen, a 2-foot-wide buffer zone, featuring double solid lines, will be created to separate the I-680 Express Lane from the general purpose lanes between Highway 84 and Highway 237. Solo Express Lane drivers as well as carpool vehicles will have specific entry and exit points rather than open access across a dotted line. It is against the law to cross over the double solid line buffer that marks the Express Lane.

“Limited access is definitely new in Northern California, but it’s common for carpool and Express Lanes in Southern California and elsewhere in the country,” said Scott Haggerty, chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and of the joint powers authority overseeing the I-680 Express Lane. “The solid lines should reduce cheating by discouraging non-paying solo drivers from cutting in and out of the lane. And with an 1,800-foot-long merge lane at access points, it should be safer, too.”

There will be three entry points and three exit points along the lane’s 14-mile route. The buffer zone striping will be done in segments each night, starting with the portion from Sheridan Road to Mission Boulevard north (Highway 238), and will be completed in time for the Express Lane to open at 5 a.m. on Monday September 20. During this final construction period, carpoolers may need to enter or leave the carpool lane at a different point than in the past in adjusting to limited access striping. Full details are online at [www.680expresslane.org](http://www.680expresslane.org).

Here are the three entry points and three exit points for the I-680 Express Lane to serve through traffic headed for Mission Boulevard south (Highway 262) and beyond:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Entry 1 | The lane starts in Sunol 1 mile south of Highway 84, 1/4 mile before Andrade. Entry serves drivers from Pleasanton and areas farther north, or drivers from Livermore and areas farther east. |
| Entry 2 | Just past Mission Boulevard north (Highway 238), before Washington Blvd. Entry serves drivers entering the freeway at Andrade, Sheridan, Vargas, and Mission north.                           |
| Entry 3 | Past Auto Mall Parkway before Mission Boulevard south (Highway 262) Entry serves drivers entering the freeway at Washington and Auto Mall.  |
| Exit 1  | Past Auto Mall Parkway<br>Exit serves drivers exiting the freeway at Mission South, Scott Creek Road and Jacklin Road.  |
| Exit 2  | Just past Jacklin Road<br>Exit serves drivers exiting the freeway on Highway 237.   |
| Exit 3  | The lane ends south of Highway 237.<br>Exit serves drivers continuing to San Jose.  |

Besides re-striping the roadway, contractors are testing the electronic toll collection system's ability to change toll amounts as traffic conditions change, testing enforcement equipment, and testing communications from the "readers" along the lane to the FasTrak computer system so tolls can be charged accurately. Drivers in the carpool lane may hear a "beep" or see a light flash as the electronics are being tested, but no tolls are being charged and no violations are being issued.

"We're getting close," said Mark Green, chair of the Alameda County Transportation Commission, which serves as administrator of the I-680 Express Lane. "When the lane opens, solo drivers with FasTrak can choose to use available space in the HOV lane in order to get a faster trip."

Here is how the lane will work:

- The lane will operate Mondays to Fridays from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., replacing the current carpool lane hours. The lane will be "open to all" at night and on weekends. California Highway Patrol officers will provide enforcement using visual and electronic means.
- Solo drivers who want to use the I-680 Express Lane between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. will need to have a FasTrak toll tag mounted on their windshield. They will be charged a toll each time they choose to use the Express Lane. The operation will be fully

electronic, with no tollbooths or tollgates, so customers will not need to slow down or stop to pay.

- Motorists with a FasTrak toll tag can enter the Express Lane at designated places. An overhead electronic sign will display the current toll being assessed. Toll costs will vary based on real-time traffic levels on the Express Lane to ensure that traffic in the lane flows smoothly.

The project's goal is to ensure that traffic is always flowing smoothly in the Express Lane by utilizing "dynamic pricing." Tolls will be determined by the amount of traffic traveling in the Express Lane and the general purpose lanes at any given time. During peak periods, when there is more traffic in the Express Lane, the toll will be higher to discourage too many additional solo drivers from entering and making the Express Lane congested. During off-peak periods, when fewer vehicles are using the lane, the toll will be lower. By changing the toll in response to the level of demand, traffic will keep flowing smoothly in the Express Lane. At the same time, the increased utilization of the Express Lane will improve the conditions within the general purpose lanes.

To obtain a FasTrak toll tag, drivers can go to [www.bayareafastrak.org](http://www.bayareafastrak.org) or to a Safeway, Costco or Walgreen's store.

Express Lanes have operated in Southern California and elsewhere in the country for many years. After I-680, the next Express Lanes in the Bay Area will be I-580 from Pleasanton to Livermore and the Highway 237 flyover to I-880 in Milpitas.